

Robert Harmon Family--Related Sites From 1825-1853

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Brief Overview of Gorham, Maine Homes:

Robert and Eunice Harmon first lived in Portland between about 1820-1825. After May, 1825 and continuing at least until the fall of 1827 they lived in the Gorham area. On October 21, 1826 Robert Harmon purchased a home to the north of Gorham. It was a small wood frame home (approx. 35' by 30') with a brick fireplace and had some accompanying out-buildings (more than likely there was a barn present as well) located on thirty-five acres. It was located on what was then a county road passing from Standish to Gorham. The home is no longer standing but the foundation can still be seen on Buck Road about one quarter mile beyond where it joins North Street. Robert Harmon sold the property on September 3, 1827 to a Zebulon Whitney. Eunice Harmon was at that time about seven months pregnant with the twins. It is unclear where the Harmons lived from September 1827-July 1829. Most of that time was probably spent in Portland. A Mrs. Harmon is listed as living in Gorham. They may have stayed with her or even rented back the home they had just sold until the twins were born.

They did make an agreement to buy a home in Portland on Jefferson Street January 16, 1828. There is no record that the sale was completed. In any event, on August 7, 1829 they purchased a home in Poland, Maine, where they lived until April 1834. After this they moved to Spruce street in Portland. Most likely Robert Harmon rented the home they later bought, located (according to the deed) on the southwest corner of Spruce and Clark. The address was known as 44 Clark street. They lived in this home until September 22, 1846. On September 16, 1846 they bought a home not far from their previous Gorham property. The address in 1994 was 243 Fort Hill road, one and a half miles north of Gorham. They then lived in Gorham until they sold the home on November 3, 1853. This information was taken from property records, directories, an 1857 wall map of Cumberland county, and a site search of the locations described, conducted by the authors.

Robert Harmon's Home - 1825-1827

Discovered May 4, 1994. Based on an 1857 map of Cumberland County, Maine and on property owner research done by James R. Nix.

Property records of Oct. 21, 1826 describe the property as follows: "Robert Harmon, 'of Gorham'" "... Hatter" buys from Isaac Sawyer a "homestead farm" "with the buildings standing thereon" consisting of "thirty five acres. . . more or less" "through which the county road passes from Standish to Gorham." Price: \$600.00. See Book 106:275.

A the basement foundation of a home set back approx. 90' from the road with a driveway leading to it. The home foundation is approx. 35' long by 30' wide. Large hewn granite foundation stones sitting on a flagstone footing are used. In the middle of the home is the crumbled brick remains of what was the chimney. There is a row of stones to the west of the home that may be a part of the foundation of the barn. A little farther to the west and before the creek there is a field without trees. The driveway begins 70' east of the gray granite property monument (8" x 8" marker protruding 16" from the ground). There is a culvert running beneath the driveway entrance.

Directions for finding the site:

From Gorham take county road #114 (Fort Hill Road) north. Pass Ellen G. White birthplace monument (on right). Continue down the hill and to the left approx. 3 miles. Pass Huston Rd and Mighty St. On right. Continue one mile west on 114 to North Street (road #6053 - just before North Street cemetery). Proceed .65 miles to Buck Road. Continue straight approx. .25 miles past Buck Road (beyond mailbox # 236). Cross a culvert and stop before creek next to open field on the right.

Home of Reuben & Elizabeth Bangs

Elizabeth Bangs, sister of Ellen Harmon, settled very close to the Harmon home (1825-1827. Lizzy married Reuben M. Bangs on April 22, 1849. By at least 1857 they moved to this location. It appears they remained in this home throughout their lives. Both are buried a short distance from their home in North Street Cemetery. The present owner is an old-timer named Jones. The old timers in the area told us that the home was owned by the Bangses.

Directions for finding the site:

From the 1825-1827 Harmon home, return to Buck Road (turn right) and proceed 3/10 mile to white house with black shutters on the left. The house (number 288) is located just before (west of) Quail Ridge Drive.

Robert Harmon Home - 1846-1853

Discovered May 4, 1994 by Merlin Burt & Stanley Hickerson. Follow Fort Hill Road (#114) west from Gorham-- proceed 1.5 miles. The house is located on the right and is gray with black shutters. The box number is 243. If you pass Phinney Street you have gone too far. It is not known whether this is the actual home or a later structure. The present home is either on or very near the original site.

Robert Harmon Portland Home - 1833-1846

There is no record until 1836 of Robert Harmon purchasing a home in Portland after living in Poland. He is listed in the Portland Directory for 1834 as, "Harmon, Robert, hatter, h spruce." The directories were usually published in the fall of the previous year. Therefore it is reasonable to believe that the Harmons moved to Portland by at least the summer or fall of 1833. On April 24, 1834, Robert Harmon sold his Poland property. In the grant deed, he is described as "of Portland."

On May 31, 1836, Robert Harmon purchased the piece of property that he would own until 1846. The grant deed says, "I Abner Gould of Portland in the county of Cumberland and state of Maine. . . in consideration of the sum of \$500.00: paid by Robert Harmon of said Portland. . . ." The lot is described as follows, "a certain lot of land situated in said Portland on the southerly side of Spruce Street and bounded as follows, viz. Beginning at a stake standing in the corner where said Spruce street intersects the line of the widow K. Brackett's Dower so called, thence westerly adjoining said Spruce street fifty two and a half feet to stake, thence southeasterly one hundred and fifteen feet to a stake, thence northeasterly sixty feet to a stake, thence northwesterly one hundred fifteen and a half feet to said Spruce Street the place of beginning the last line named being on the Brackett Dower so called."¹

At the time of this purchase Clark Street did not exist at Spruce. Spruce terminated at the later location of Clark street. Ten years later when Robert Harmon sold the property, the legal description was much clearer and included a clear description of the property's relationship to Clark Street which had been laid before that time. From the decrease in dimensions it is clear that 23 feet more or less was taken off the southwesterly edge of his property to build the road. In addition, 26 feet more or less was taken from the length of the property. It is not clear whether this portion was removed from the north or the south end of the property. The end result is legally described as in the sale of the property to Stephen Files on September 22, 1846. "A certain lot of land situated in said Portland, on the Southerly side of Spruce Street, and bounded as follows, viz. beginning at a stake standing in the corner where said Spruce St. intersects the line formerly called the widow Brackett's dower, thence Westerly adjoining said Spruce St. 29 1/2 feet to Clark Street, thence Southeasterly adjoining said Clark St. 89 feet to a stake, thence northeasterly 36 1/3 feet to land owned by Roberts, thence Northwesterly on said Roberts' line to said Spruce St. being the place of beginning." (All legal descriptions are quoted precisely and include spelling and grammatical peculiarities.) The property descriptions and the way land is lost for the establishment of Clark Street make it quite probable that the property was located on the southeasterly corner of Spruce and Clark.

¹ Grant Deed found in Cumberland County Records book number 149:108.

In establishing the location of the present modern site, there is one additional point that must be noted. Spruce Street was moved 100 feet more or less to the south at some point after the Harmons purchased their property. In later years Spruce Street was removed between Clark and Brackett. Today the entire area is a public school. Thus the most likely modern location where the Harmon home stood is in the school yard on the east side of Clark Street opposite of and a little north of the present Spruce Street.²

² This information was compiled by a careful evaluation of various maps of Portland from the period and county records. For records of the first location of Spruce street, see Book 126:525 (dated 1823). The lot sizes listed in the book are correct but there are twice as many lots as will fit between Pine and Gray.